

Three Ideas to Improve Evangelism

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A few years ago, the business world discovered the word “evangelism.” The idea, borrowed from the church and adapted and applied to the business world became a business buzzword. The initial application in the business world was simple: the need to explain to the world how a certain product or service would improve one’s life. But the application in business went further, focusing on the necessity to believe in a product or service enough to want others to enjoy the same benefits and experiences. Marketing departments changed their emphasis. Marketing not only meant proclaiming the value of a product or service; marketing required personal involvement and a focus on the well-being and benefit of the consumer. It did not take long for businesses to learn that satisfied customers were the best potential evangelists—that they would spread the word about a product or service without pay.

Today, effective business marketing begins with the top echelon and filters down through marketing departments, sales representatives, and customers to get the word out (to evangelize). Marketing is everyone’s job! What can the church learn from the business world?

Churches may have evangelism programs, certain members who are active in evangelism and members at large who share their excitement about Christianity, but it must begin with the leaders. It is of utmost importance that leaders be able to explain the benefits. The business world understands that evangelism is everyone’s business. Leaders who effectively tell the story not only build a healthy organization, they also set an example. So also in the church, it is extremely important that the leaders be involved in evangelism. An evangelistic preacher and evangelistic elders set the tone for the church and provides an example for the members.

From the business application of the concept of evangelism come three ideas about how to evangelize more effectively in today’s world. The most obvious application is to church leaders, those who serve as preachers (ministers or evangelists) and elders, although every Christian can apply these ideas to improve our outreach.

The Importance of Networking

It is easier to share with people you already know or people who already know you. This is the importance of social connections—building lasting, trusting relationships. Obviously this occurs internally in the church, but external networking is much more important in the work of evangelism. Many full-time ministry workers do not know how to do this.

- Get out of the office. Networking is a contact sport. Go where people are; plan your day to include time spent where you can be in touch with new people.
- Seek connections. Show interest in others. See others as potential friends; develop “soul awareness”—see others as souls. See the world and the people in the world through the eyes of God.
- Ask questions. Initiate conversations, then be quiet and listen.
- Do not hesitate to reveal your own passions. Common interests provide more ways to connect with people.

- Follow up. Think about ways you can keep the contact alive, send emails; make phone calls; demonstrate that you are interested and that it is worthwhile to the other person to share relationship.
- Use email and social media effectively, keep current, be simple and brief, resend unanswered emails as a reminder of your interest.
- Make it easy for others to get in touch with you.
- Be aware, observe birthdays, special anniversaries, do favors for others.

Seek and accept invitations to speak publicly in other venues

Learn to speak in venues other than the pulpit. To be effective as an evangelist, you must develop the skill of public speaking which may be significantly different than your preaching style.

- Deliver quality content, have something to say, say it well, say it briefly.
- Omit the sales pitch. Be sensitive to the purpose of the events where you are invited to speak. For preachers focused on sharing the gospel, think carefully about whether commencement speeches, funerals, and community events are the place to give a sales pitch.
- Customize any public speaking opportunities; do not warm over something you already have prepared. Make clear in the first part of the speech that you understand the audience, the needs of the occasion, and your purpose for being there. Learn now to connect with the audience—the only experience many of us have is in the church where the audience is generally receptive and ready to listen.
- Do not hesitate to be entertaining. No amount of good information can rescue a dull speech.
- Tell stories. Be sure the stories support the message, and are not just a funny or cute story you have heard somewhere. Stories should do more than get attention.
- Circulate before and after. Wherever you are, show interest, develop friendships.
- Practice public speaking and hone your skills.

Use Social Media

Networking may connect you with a hundred or more people each year once you become adept at it. Public speaking may put you in front of even more depending on the number of and nature of the events at which you speak. But social media can extend your reach to thousands within a few weeks or months.

- Offer something of value. The rule is simple: share good stuff, whether original or reposted.
- Be interesting, think broadly.
- Take chances. Be bold on matters affect the church and those you contact.
- Be brief. Capture interest quickly.
- Be kind and honorable. Be positive and make intelligent comments; provide links and suggestions for other resources and solutions.
- Make it easy to read, use bulleted points for longer pieces.
- Tempt with headlines.
- Learn to use hashtags.
- Stay active, post regularly.

Evangelism is not self-promotion. Evangelism is about sharing the best of what you, your team, and the church stand for. That opportunity—and responsibility—falls to everyone, but especially to the recognized leaders whose work must include reaching out with the gospel.